

Whispers Of The Past

In a supreme effort to refocus my cleaning efforts at the Centerville Cemetery, I decided to get back to working my way down the row I started with a couple years ago. It's the first row when you drive in, starting with Myra Townsend, then Sanford Wood, Oliver Marks and so on.

The next one was Nancy M. Pickle. Her headstone had been knocked off the base and broken into 3 pieces. Nearby was her son, John E. Pickle. He has a separate headstone and was named after his father. Nancy and husband, John, came to Montana in 1881 from Minnesota. He was a blacksmith and they lived in Bedford for several years. What is really tragic, at least in my mind, is they had 7 children and only one lived into adulthood. One!



After the Civil War, where John served in the Union Army, they joined the Seventh Adventist Church and are thought to be the first of this church in Montana. Sometime after Nancy died, he moved back to Minnesota where he outlived two other wives, passing at the age of 90.

Having stared at Nancy's headstone for way too long, contemplating what to do, I noticed there was another name at the bottom of it with the name Celia A., 1881 - 1896, four years after her mother died. It's a dark headstone, so it is hard to see. I could not find a death certificate for any of them.

I watched a bunch more YouTube videos on how to repair broken headstones and decided to give it a try. I ordered the epoxy from Atlas Preservation and will attempt to fix Nancy's headstone.

I did get started by leveling the base with cement and of course, it started to rain. The next day I went out to check on it and it was set up nicely except for some bird tracks in the wet cement left sometime after I left. What the heck? I'll get the base reset soon, depending on the weather and then I'll probably need help lifting the top part. It's heavy and I'm old.

In the meantime, I cleaned John's headstone and plan to reset his footstone. There has been a lot of soil and sawdust from the mill that has blown in over the decades and it was half buried.

Next to the Pickle family are the Gill boys, James T. and James H., who lived with their family on a ranch near Canton. James T. only lived for 2 months. As with a lot of families, and I've noticed the same thing in my own family history, the use of the same name later is fairly common.

James H. died at the age of 12 in 1913 when he was out fixing fence with his brothers and cousin. At the end of the day, the boys decided to run their horses back to the ranch. The horse James was riding stepped into a hole and fell, taking James with it and landing on the boy. James suffered a broken pelvis and hip,

along with internal organ bleeding. After days in the hospital in Helena, he passed from these injuries.

The Gill family had 6 children, and the four-remaining lived into adulthood.

So, there you have it, the sad stories of a couple pioneer families who lost children and buried them at Centerville. When I first saw the names of these people, Gill and Pickle, I thought how interesting it was they were buried near each other. Sometimes you have to dig deep to find something to smile about, even after discovering their histories.